

The Causes of the F A S T , appointed by the G E N E R A L L A S S E M B L Y
to be kept the last WWednesday of March. 1645.

He wrath of GOD incumbent on us, waxing more and more hote, and threatening day by day greater destruction, calleth and crieth aloud to prepare our selves To meet our God, To acknowledge our offences, and Seek his Mercy. Though one of the causes of our last solemne Humiliation (to wit, the slow progresse of the much wished for Work of Reformation, and intended Uniformitie in Publike Worship, and Kirk-Government) by a fair way and good measure removed by our gracious L O R D , who is a G O D that heareth Prayer, and in the midst of Wrath remembreth Mercy; yet all the rest of the Causes, both of the evil of Sin and of our Unbelief, are rather increased than abated.

1. The unnaturall bloody War between King and Subjects still continueth, and though this War be fomented by Prelaticall Faction, by Malignants, Delinquents, and their Complices; By the Queen, her compassing Sea and Land for her purpose; Yet for any thing we can see or learn, Our King, led by ill counsell, is guilty of shedding much innocent blood Sea and Land; whereof we have presently dolefull experience, in sending against us cruell Irishes, *Skilfull to destroy*. These bloody Butchers, led by one excommunicate, perfidious in the Covenant, do range and run from place to place, Ring, Spoiling, Burning, Slaying, without any respect to Sex or Age, they practise all mischief, and prosper; a proofe, as of the L O R D his feeding and fitting of them to the day of slaughter; so of his anger and indignation against us. Rock hath for a time sold us, he goeth not forth with our Armies as before, he giveth not the wonted blessing to our Armies, nor the former successe to our Expeditions: And not onely is the Sword of a Barbarous Enemy, eating People and drinking Blood; but we are threatned also with the Plagues of Famine and Pestilence, which is breaking out into divers parts of our Countrey.

No wonder: For 1. *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness, it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, there is no Truth, no Mercie, nor knowledge of God in the Land: By Swearing, Lying, Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood.* None have taken to heart nor repented of their Delection and Back-sliding of our Kirk, in time of Prelacie; Princes, Rulers, Pastors, People, all have sinned haire-breadth, one foolishly: These in whose hands the Sword of Justice is put, have been slow to execute Justice unpartially: The Ministers also in many places are often asleep, keep silence, or speak amisse, prove not faithfull, labour not upon the souls committed unto them, for instructing and informing of their judgements, for quickning and rectifying of their affections towards the Work of the L O R D; but rather temporise, doing all things for the Time, and nothing for the Truth; they do rather weaken than strengthen heart and hand in the Work of the L O R D, notwithstanding of their Oath to the contrary. No marvel therefore that the Multitude be over-grown with Prophanity, Security, Neutrality, and fall on murmurings against publike Ordinances for the common safety of the Kingdom.

Our Covenant doth binde us to Reformation of Judicatories, as well as to a Reformation of Persons and Families, and requireth of those who have Servants and Followers to endeavour their Reformation: But where is there any Reformation to be seen? The L O R D is working wonders for advancing Religion in the Power, Puritie, and Spiritualitie of it: But where is any Proofe of Godlinesse to be found? It is rather hated and mocked, Christ and his Gospel dis-esteemed: Many of all ranks do live in meer formality, and content themselves with the bare name of a Covenant, and of a Profession; Yea, Sin did never increase, and then now, though amidst many Mercies on the one hand, and many sad Judgements on the other. And among us are Covenanters, and stand in Arms for the Covenant, nothing almost to be heard or seen, but fearful Oaths, Sabbath-breaking, Oppressions of very friends, Quarrellings, VVhorings, Carousings, and such fearfull abominations, which make us to mourn.

Never a Nation hath tasted of higher Favours, of rarer Mercies: Yet where is there any Nation lesse deserving? more unthankfull of the Works and Wonders of the L O R D, or more unthankfull? Not any more ready to forget unparalleled Mercies; not any more prone to Murmure, to Quarrell, to Distrust; None more ready to kisse their own right hand, when it is done; None more ready to trust in man, when any thing is to be done; None more ready to quarrell with God, at the evil of his Way and Covenant, when any thing is mis-done: No looking up to the Hand that limites us, nor to the Hand that bindes up and heales us.

For these and such like causes, *Jacob is given for a spoile, and Israel to the robbers.* The worst of the heathen are brought against us. Yet if we will bestirre our selves to call on G O D, To lay hold on him, To wrestle with him for the Blessing, To Repent of our Sins; our hardnesse of heart, our slight and superficial performance of our former Fasts and Humiliations, we may be confident that there is yet hope in Israel: And though this be the time of Jacobs trouble, he shall assuredly be saved out of it, he rather, because of the glorious and stately Steps whereby the L O R D hath been pleased to manifest himself, in the progress of this great Work, and now in this Assembly: whereby we may easily perceive, That he keepeth still a purpose of saving us, and doth but *Hide himself for a time*, till we *Seek him early*, and Return to him heartily.

A. Ker.